News from the Wyoming Department of Health

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Free Vaccines Available for Children Under New State Program

CHEYENNE ó All Wyoming children will be eligible to receive free vaccines as an expanded Wyoming Department of Health immunization program begins September 1.

Dr. Brent Sherard, Wyoming Department of Health director and state health officer, is hailing the vaccine program as a major step forward.

õThis is an excellent investment in the health of Wyoming& children,ö Sherard said. õBefore vaccines, many children died from diseases that vaccines now mostly prevent, such as whooping cough, measles and polio. Vaccines help parents protect their children, and help protect the overall health of our communities.ö

Children of parents/legal guardians who are Wyoming residents will be eligible for all available vaccine under the Wyoming Vaccinates Important People (WyVIP) program at any participating healthcare provider regardless of insurance status. The only cost to parents will be the administration fee or office fees charged by the healthcare provider and these may be covered by insurance. Administration fees are limited by law to a maximum of \$14.31 per shot.

The Wyoming Legislature appropriated \$5,000,000 during its 2006 session to provide vaccines for the children who do not qualify under the federal Vaccines for Children program. Wyoming will continue to receive funding under the federal program to cover Medicaid-enrolled, no insurance, Native American/Alaskan Native, and underinsured children (only at only at Rural Health Centers and Federally Qualified Health Centers).

Katelyn Wells-Fahling, Wyoming Immunization Program manager, said the state will be able to purchase most WyVIP vaccine off the federally negotiated contract, resulting in a more economical rate.

õBecause it is possible for both the state and federal governments to increase or decrease funding for vaccines from year to year, we will work together with Wyomingøs healthcare providers to best use the available dollars,ö Wells-Fahling said.

õParticular vaccine availability decisions will be based upon the cost of vaccines, public health risk factors, population estimates, disease trends and other factors,ö Wells-Fahling continued. õThere may be cases when WyVIP approves a vaccine for a portion of the population due to limited funding or vaccine availability.ö Wyoming statutes designate the state health officer, who works with an appointed Vaccine Advisory Board, as the decision-making authority regarding antigen type, brand and quantity of state-purchased vaccines.

Wells-Fahling said about 125 healthcare providers are participating in the WyVIP program. For a list of participating providers, visit www.immunizewyoming.com online or call 307-777-7621. The website also includes a fact sheets for parents about the new program, along with more information about vaccines in Wyoming.

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